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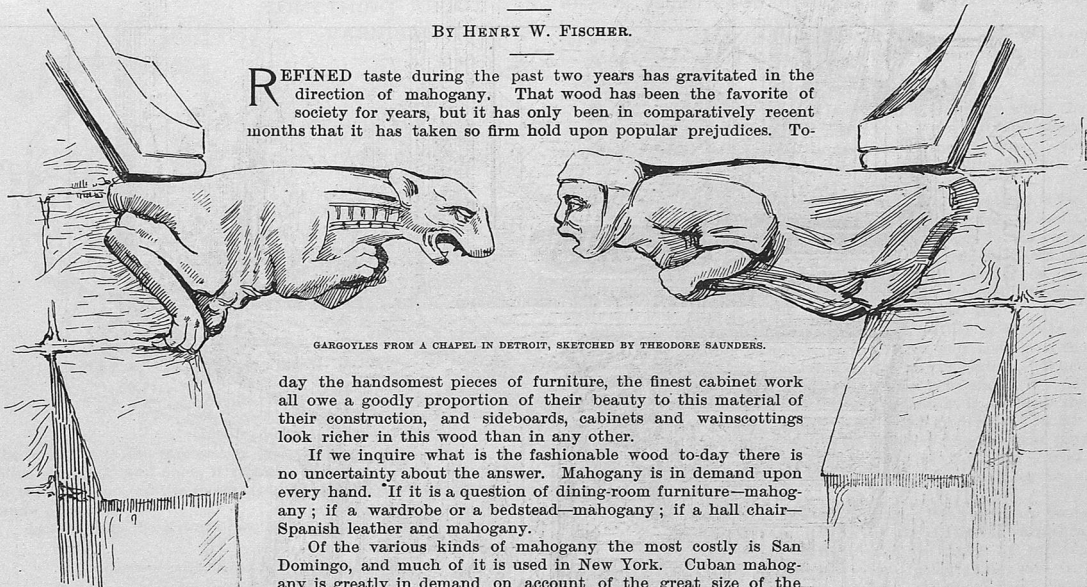
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THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

A FASHIONABLE WOOD.

BY HENRY W. FISCHER.

REFINED taste during the past two years has gravitated in the direction of mahogany. That wood has been the favorite of society for years, but it has only been in comparatively recent months that it has taken so firm hold upon popular prejudices. To-



GARGOYLES FROM A CHAPEL IN DETROIT, SKETCHED BY THEODORE SAUNDERS.

day the handsomest pieces of furniture, the finest cabinet work all owe a goodly proportion of their beauty to this material of their construction, and sideboards, cabinets and wainscottings look richer in this wood than in any other.

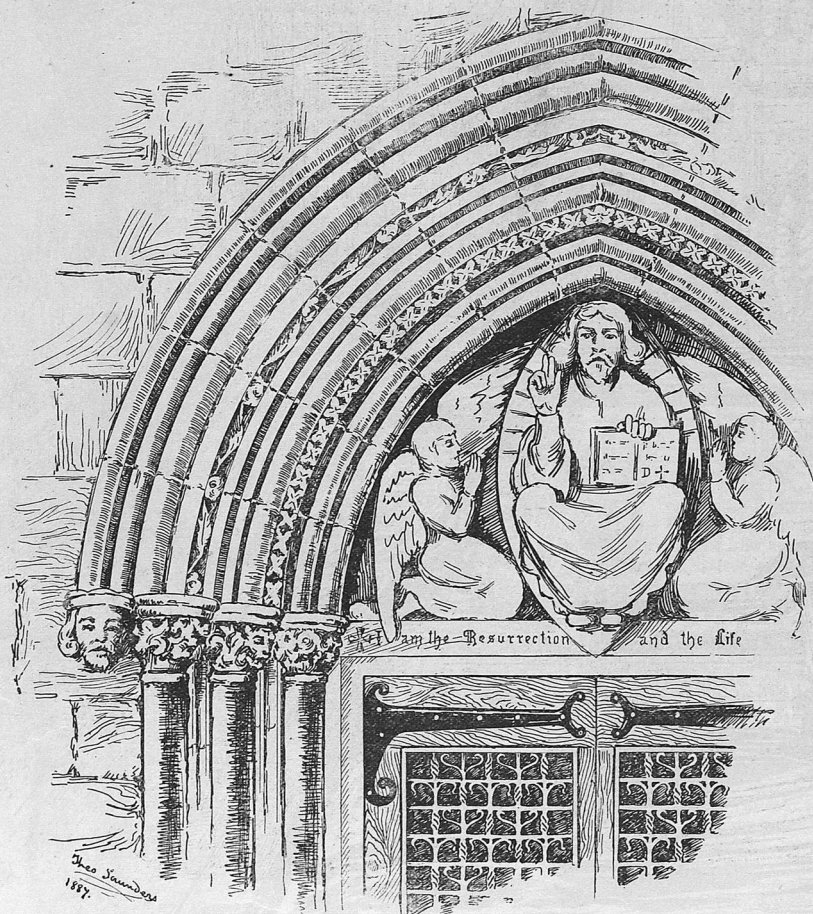
If we inquire what is the fashionable wood to-day there is no uncertainty about the answer. Mahogany is in demand upon every hand. If it is a question of dining-room furniture—mahogany; if a wardrobe or a bedstead—mahogany; if a hall chair—Spanish leather and mahogany.

Of the various kinds of mahogany the most costly is San Domingo, and much of it is used in New York. Cuban mahogany is greatly in demand on account of the great size of the logs, many of which are sixteen feet in circumference and range from 800 to 3,000 cubic feet, the largest ever brought to this city measuring 4,200. There is no question as to the great beauty of either, and now that they have both been accepted as the proper material for dining tables and the polished top will be accepted as a *recherché* substitute for the old time damask, the demand for them, from this one source alone, will be greatly increased.

One would suppose the day of veneer was at an end, the solid wood is so thoroughly used and especially in the interior fittings of houses, even the comparatively cheap buildings, costing from \$15,000 to \$17,000, being well finished with hard wood—hard mahogany.

Singularly enough the great popularity of the wood has served to make it lower in price rather than higher, and it is now practically within the reach of every one. For example the quotations two years ago were twenty-two cents per foot, it is at present quoted from seven to fourteen and a half cents for Mexican and seven to ten for Cuban stock. This shows a disposition on the part of importers and dealers to encourage the budding disposition of the people and to encourage it by placing the wood at a low figure. There is no reason why furniture made from mahogany should be noticeably more expensive than that made from any other wood, the reason that the contrary is the case does not emanate with the importer, it gathers expense after it leaves his hands and by the time it develops into a sideboard it is marked altogether out of its legitimate proportions.

The deep red mahogany is the most beautiful and most popular of woods, although there is a white mahogany that in some slight degree partakes of the attractive elements of its radiant relation. It is generally used for the fittings of rooms or stores, where a particularly bright effect is sought and gold trimmings form a portion of decoration.



DOORWAY, ARCH AND TYMPANUM OF A CHAPEL IN DETROIT, SKETCHED BY THEODORE SAUNDERS.

THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

The question of fittings for new buildings is receiving marked attention, and especially when it is asked concerning the rich and costly houses being erected in the upper wards of our city, designed as houses for those residents in easy circumstances and possessed of artistic tendencies. In a three story dwelling house the wood work will vary with the rooms. Walnut might be suitable for the reception room; antique oak or cherry would do well for the dining-room; ash and bird's-eye maple would fit up the bedrooms nicely, while the halls and stairs might be resplendent in mahogany.

There is now completed on an uptown street a house wherein the staircase, which is carried up four stories, is of polished mahogany, with panelings of the same running up the entire height of the walls, and there can be no more striking entrance than this one.

The cost of decoration in wood of course varies considerably. One single room in the city fitted up in mahogany, carved, cost \$60,000, and yet cheap houses, as we have said, are frequently finished in the same wood. For tenants the modern custom for finishing is a most desirable fashion. Cornices and curtain poles in a house of any size whatever represent considerable expense, and it must be a satisfaction for the tenant to find these necessary articles furnished for him. Even the window frames are rescued from the old time common place, and made of handsome wood, have become a decorative feature and extend from floor to ceiling.

The giving of any definite rules for the selection of woods in decoration is difficult, so much depends upon individual taste and so much upon the fashion of the moment. With the immense popularity of it there is some danger of overcrowding and overloading small rooms. It is a mistake to suppose that wainscotings and panels are appropriate everywhere. Wood (mahogany) mantels have been widely used and many have been substituted for marble, and the harmony with the mahogany overmantel is better.

Naturally enough with the exceedingly high standing that mahogany has taken, there are base imitations made up that often times almost approach the original itself. Irresponsible dealers sell the imitation for the real, and the deception may pass unnoticed for one or even two years, when the wood be-

comes so dull and clouded that the purchaser, unconscious of the deception, denounces mahogany roundly and transfers his allegiance to some other wood. Common birch makes the best imitation of mahogany.

A prominent lumberman visiting the American Institute Fair about two years ago, noticed what pretended to be a mahogany bedroom suite, and asked the exhibitor what wood it was made of.

"Mahogany," answered the exhibitor.

"San Domingo mahogany?"

"No, I don't think it is."

"Is it Spanish or Mexican?"

"No, it is neither."

"What kind is it then?"

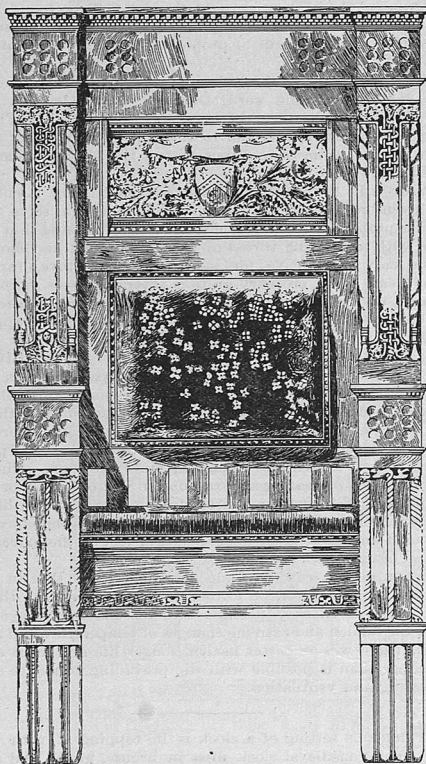
"It is what we call California mahogany."

There is no such wood in existence, and this may possibly have been the ordinary California redwood, which is good in its way, but its way, of course, is not the way of mahogany.

Mahogany is said to be the only wood impervious to dampness and not affected by atmospheric changes. This freedom from climatic influence makes it especially desirable for car builders.

FANS may be seen mounted on tortoise shell, composed of successive tiers of feathers in harmonious shades, with head of humming bird in centre; others of the finest lace with sepia landscapes in the background, visible through the delicate meshes. The Japanese fashion of attaching to lacquered boxes forms of insects, reptiles and human figures in oxidized silver is applied to the variation of the surface of repoussé work, where this consists simply of a repetition of concave forms.

AMONG automatic mechanical devices are hidden sources of music. Thus a glass enameled flagon, on being lifted to the lips, rings out with *Liebens Sonnenschein* (Life's Sunshine); an open carafe delights with an allegro, and on pressing the epaulette of the left shoulder of an Austrian officer of dragoons, one is treated to an operatic gem.



A Hall Chair

